

IN SEARCH OF THE MOTHER IN *JANE EYRE* BY CHARLOTTE BRONTE,
THEIR EYES WERE WATCHING GOD BY ZORA NEALE HURSTON,
AND *SULA* BY TONI MORRISON

A Dissertation

Presented To

The Faculty of the Department

Of English

University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements For the Degree Of

Doctor of Philosophy

By

Prity Bhalla

December, 2017

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Abstract

This dissertation applies poststructuralist and feminist psychoanalytic theories in the analysis of *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston, and *Sula* by Toni Morrison. Through the application of the writings of post-structuralist critic Helene Cixous, and feminist psychoanalysts Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva, I explore the importance of the relationship to the mother as a crucial component in the formation of female identity and agency as it is revealed in these three novels. I argue that the novels illustrate how women can discover a psychic knowledge and power that grants them the capacity to experience a specifically female subjectivity by channeling within their unconscious the pre-oedipal mother. The dissertation also traces in these novels the loss of the mother within Western hegemonic culture which has resulted in a devastating violence manifested in the social order and upon humanity.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	iii
Introduction	1
Chapter One: Historical Contexts	18
Chapter Two: <i>Jane Eyre</i> : The Loss of the Mother	39
Chapter Three: Love of the Mother in <i>Their Eyes Were Watching God</i>	78
Chapter Four: <i>Sula</i> : The “Outlaw” Mother	106
Conclusion	135
End Notes	141
Bibliography	148

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